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BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON

During Great Lent, we hear Psalm 137 sung with a haunting tune, we are intrigued and decide to read the Psalm when we arrive home. When we do, we are puzzled and wonder why this particular psalm has been chosen to be sung at this time.

Upon reading, we find that the psalm was written sometime between 587 and 537 B.C. The psalmist was an exile longing to return to his homeland. "The waters of Babylon" were the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and the irrigation canals that flowed from them. The area is in present day Iraq. The exiles hung up their harps because they were too sad to play and they did not wish to sing the songs they had sung in the Temple for the amusement of their captors. They are homesick. The music reflects this.

The psalm may have been chosen because we Orthodox live in exile in this world and long to return to our true home, Heaven. The Great Lent is like a season of exile prescribed by the Church to remind us how far we have wandered from Home. We have been exiled because of our sinfulness and need to be reminded of this by fasting, prayer and repentance.

As Fr. Seraphim wrote: "Weak and forgetful, even in the midst of Great Lent we live as though Jerusalem (Heaven) did not exist for us. We fall in love with the world, our Babylon, we are seduced by the frivolous pastimes of this "strange land" and neglect the services and discipline of the Church, which reminds us of our true Home. Worse yet, we love our very captors - for our songs hold us captive more surely than any human master - and their service. We pass in idleness the precious days of Lent, when we should be preparing to meet the Rising Sun of the New Jerusalem, the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ."

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WHO WAS HE

If we check the calendar for the fourth Sunday of Great Lent, which falls on March 21 this year, we see that it is dedicated to St. John Climacus. We know that he wrote The Ladder of Divine Ascent, which is one of the most widely read book on spirituality in the Orthodox Church. Its popularity in the East rivals that of The Imitation of Christ in the West. It is read during this Lenten season in all Orthodox monastic communities. We can see ikons depicting the ladder with 30 rungs which must be climbed to attain spiritual perfection. The book was translated into English in 1959.

But who was St. John and what inspired him to write the book? There are over 115 St. John's listed on the Orthodox calendar. The St. John who wrote the book is identified by four names: St. John Climacus, St. John Scholasticus, St. John of the Ladder and St. John of Sinai. He lived from 579-649. When he was sixteen, he went to live at a monastery in Sinai and was tonsured a monk four years later. He left the main monastery and went to live as a hermit about five miles away. While living here, he is said to have received the gift of tears and the grace of continual prayer. Soon monks in large numbers came to him for spiritual guidance. He was then

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DEPARTED LOVED ONES

As we travel through the Holy Season of the Great Fast on the way to Pascha, the Glorious Resurrection of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, we are given vivid signposts along the way concerning those who have gone on before us in the hope of resurrection from the dead. These signposts are called Soul or Memorial Saturdays on which we devote our undivided attention to our departed loved ones.

We should have already given a list of the names of our departed relatives and friends for prayer on these days. If we have not, it is not too late for in March we have three Memorial Saturdays - the 6th, 13th and 20th. Not only should we submit a list but we should try to attend the services, when the names on our list will be read aloud. With the list, it is customary to give a stipend.

St. John Chrysostom, who composed the Divine Liturgy, which is served most, says the following about prayers for the dead.

"The dead are helped not by tears but by prayers and supplications, and almsgiving and offerings. It is not by chance that these have been offered, nor is it due to haphazard thinking that we commemorate the dead at the sacred mysteries, and that we assist them by supplication to the Lamb.

"Therefore, let us help them (the dead) and make commemoration in their behalf. For if Job's sacrifice purified his children, why do you doubt that the departed receive comfort when we offer sacrifice for them? ... Why then, do you grieve and weep when you are able to apply so great a forgiveness to him who has departed?"

LIGHTER MOMENT

One oldster to another: "I got so cold last night, I couldn't sleep. I just shivered."

"Did your teeth chatter?" inquired his friend.

"I don't know. We don't sleep together."

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CHRONOLOGY

DIED: Fr. Vitaly Voshchullo (retired) in Albuquerque, NM

RELICS OF MARTYR VALENTINE were presented to the Russian Orthodox Church by the Catholic community of the Italian town of Terni. They will repose in Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow.

BEJING, CHINA. The Russian Orthodox Church has been here since 300 years. The last priest was buried recently. However, 12 Chinese young men are attending theological seminaries in Russia so that they can return and care for Orthodox Christians here.

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX have joined other groups in protesting the gathering of names by the Mormons, who have the practice of baptizing non-Mormons posthumously. The Mormons insist that their church is only providing an archive of genealogical data for the public good and is not using the names for proxy baptisms.

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA has given grants of $15,000 for 2004 to Archangel Gabriel Mission in Ashland, OR (it's third), St. Athanasius Mission in Nicholasville, KY, St. John of Kronstadt Mission in Lincoln, NE, St. Herman in Port Townsend, WA and All Saints of Alaska - St. Arseny Mission in Victoria, BC, Canada. Deadline for 2005 grants is August 2004.

WHAT NEXT? In 20 questions about your views on God, the afterlife, suffering, goodworks, etc. Belief-O Matic on www.beliefnet.com tells what faith you should practice and how your beliefs align with other faiths.

IT IS POSSIBLE TO PURCHASE Pascha kuliches (bread) at stores of the supermarket chain Perkrestokan in Moscow at Easter/Pascha time.

THE OCMC has Mission Teams for 2004 planned for Alaska, Ghana, Guatemala, Tanzania, Korea, Romania, India, and Brazil. For info: www.ocmc.org/teams or call 1-877-GO-Forth

THE MAYOR OF BARI, ITALY presented 258,000 euros to the Greek Archdiocese toward the rebuilding of St. Nicholas Church destroyed on 9/11. Bari has a basilica where relics of St. Nicholas were enshrined on May 9, 1087.

THE VATICAN has issued a document which, in great detail, gives directives on how the Mass is to be celebrated. It has become concerned on how changes have gradually crept into the Mass. Parishes have until Dec. 5 to conform.

COLLEGE STUDENTS are encouraged to make a mission trip to Ukraine from July 30-August 7 to work at orphanages in Zaluchya and Znamyanka, which have been adopted by the UOC. Deadline is March 15. For info: uocyouth@aol.com or 412-488-9664.

ORDER YOUR EASTER/PASCHA CARDS. Orthodox Christian Greeting Cards, PO Box 20001, York, PA 17402 or rogandel@yahoo.com

ST. PETERSBURG, FL was founded by a Russian immigrant, Peter Dementyev (Demens). The landing to a park on Tampa Bay has been named Demens Landing in his honor and a monument to P. A. Dementyev has been erected in the park.

THE JACKSON-VANIK AMENDMENT has sanctions against Russia and many of the countries which were part of the USSR. Getting visas for relatives to visit from these countries has been made difficult and impossible at times.

A FUNDRAISER ABOARD Hornblower's yacht Monte Carlo has been set for May 23 by the Congress of Russian America's Children's Committee. Call 415/928-5831 or email crahq@earthlink.net

AXIOS, an independent group of gay Orthodox, has protested the August 27, 2003 statement issued by SCOBA, which states that they "cannot and will not bless same-sex unions" and that "marriage is necessarily monogamous and heterosexual." It asked that gays and lesbians "be cared for with the same mercy and love" as all people.

THE JESUS PRAYER has been included in a book, "Creating a Life with God: The Call of Ancient Prayer Practices" by Daniel Wolpert. The early desert fathers have been included in the first chapter. The book released by Upper Room Books can be reviewed at www.SpiritualityHealth.com

THE LIFE OF ST. CONSTANTINE by Euphemia Briere is a 44 pp. book written for older children. It will also be found informative by many adults. It is available from St. Nectarios Press, 10300 Ashworth Ave. N, Seattle, WA 98133-9410 or call 1-800-643-4233. Price $4 plus $2 for postage.

A NUTRITION ENTREPRENEUR noting that Moses just before his death at 120 according to Deut. 34:3 "his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated" is offering a Bible Bar based on seven foods God recommended at the end of the 40-year desert trek, which Moses led. Given in Deut. 8:8 they are made of wheat, barley, honey, olive oil, figs, pomegranates and grapes.

THE ANGLICAN ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY has been barred from conducting communion services in 350 Church of England parishes. The move by traditionalist churches means they will not allow women - or any bishop who has ordained women priests - to celebrate communion before their congregations.

IN KRYNICA, POLAND, the Eastern-rite Catholics were returned the church which they built in the 19th century. Many Eastern-rite Catholics feel they are being denied proper recognition by the majority Roman Catholic church. Fr. Pipka, a Ukrainian priest assigned to the church, says he finds it easier to communicate with the Lutherans, who have the same problems of acceptance than with the Roman Catholics.

(Continued from front page)
BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON

As this whole month of March is part of Great Lent, there is still time for us to remember our true home, strive towards the goal of Heaven, and to weep over the sins which have exiled us from it. We should take to heart the words of St. John of the Ladder, who we commemorate on March 21 who wrote: "Exile is separation from everything in order to keep the mind inseparable from God. An exile loves and produces continual weeping." Exiled from Paradise, we must become exiled from the world if we hope to return."

(Continued from front page)
WHO WAS HE

criticized for making a mockery of his hermitage by receiving so many people. Stung by the criticism, he decided to keep total silence. After a year or so, even those who had criticized him begged him to resume guiding others.

After forty years of life as a hermit and against his will, the monks at the main monastery elected him to be their abbot. The abbot of a nearby monastery, off the Gulf of Suez, asked him to write a book about spiritual life. "Tell us in our ignorance what, like Moses of old, you have seen in divine vision upon the mountain; write it down in a book and send it to us as if it were the tables of Moses the Law, written by God."

St. John answered him stating that the task was beyond his strength and that he himself was still among the learners. However, his sense of obedience led him to agree to write a book "in my stammering way," which would serve as something of a sketch of his thinking. The result was The Ladder of Divine Ascent.

We hear of the book and its author every fourth Sunday of Lent. We may well consider which rung we stopped at in the previous year, the year before that, the year before that. Have we climbed higher, fallen down a rung or do we start each year at the bottom rung?

* * * * * *

Plenty of people are willing to give God credit, yet few are willing to give Him cash.

(Continued from page 88)
BIBLE STUDY

life in the widest possible sense. We choose to be strong and effective by making responsible commitments to ourselves and others. Lasting promises give our lives stability and bring the rewards of strong and caring relationships.

As God gives us an example of firm commitment in the story of Noah, we must give examples of strong and enduring commitment to our children and to future generations. The choices we make and the way we keep our promises influence the character of those we touch. Just as human existence depends on God's keeping His covenant, the endurance of our parishes and our society depend on what our actions teach those younger than ourselves.

CREATIVE ME?

God wants us to find joy and happiness in our lives. Some times it takes some real creativity to do as He asks. We know that creativity is not confined to painting a picture or composing a hit song. In its true sense, creativity is our response to the continually changing world around us and within us. It means we adapt to life's experiences, both good and bad, and learn from them.

We can be as creative in giving loving support to friends and family in need, as any writer or painter creating a masterpiece. Our life, taken as a whole, can be seen as a work of art, with each action a stroke in our masterpiece.

But now and then, we lose the energy it takes to see the world afresh. We fall into boring routines. We want to get out of the rut. We want to become more creative in our lives, to regain the productive energy we once felt. But where do we start?

Genesis holds a wealth of insight into the creative process. Insights we can apply to our own lives.

Genesis tells us that God created the universe from nothing at all, and on the seventh day, He rested. But as we continue reading, we find a surprise. The story seems to start again. This repetition is no mistake.

By repetition the author wants to tell us that although God has finished the initial phase, the process of creation did not end on the sixth day. It is still going on all around us and within us. And we are part of the amazing creative process. We only need to open ourselves to it.

Too often we think of creation as making something out of nothing, as if we are required to create from a complete vacuum. But this sort of creation is up to God alone.

Creativity lies in our willingness to be patient, to listen to and watch the grandeur of God's masterpiece unfold in every moment of our lives. Every day is full of new sights, sounds and smells. If we pause to observe life's intricate and ever-renewing patterns, we can break our boring routines simply by realizing how wonderfully new and different each moment can be.

God's creativity brings its own special form of energy – a flow of warmth and goodness that enlivens and energizes us. We feel it in every moment of happiness. God wants us to be open to His joy as part of His ongoing creation. Will you let Him?

WHICH ARE YOU

Are you an active member
The kind that would be missed?
Or are you just contented
That your name be on the list?

Do you attend the services
and mingle with the flock?
Or do you stay at home
and criticize and knock?

Do you ever visit
a member who is sick?
Or leave this for others
Then talk about the clique?

Come to church often
and help with hand and heart
Don't be just a member
but take an active part.

Think this over member
you know right from wrong
Are you an active member
or do you just belong?

ORTHODOXY IN ALASKA

During the past several months, I've had the opportunity to share my experiences as a short-term missionary. For almost six months last year, I immersed myself in study. I read all that I could about Alaska, past and present, especially the history of the Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska. Many nights I lost all track of time as I discovered more about our diocese to the north.

The story of Orthodoxy in Alaska officially began in 1794. After traveling for almost one year across Russia and Siberia, ten missionaries arrived in Kodiak on September 24 of that year. Their purpose was to minister to the spiritual needs of the members of the Russian-American Company and to spread the Gospel to the native population. Among them was a humble monk who was greatly loved by those he served. St. Herman of Alaska, our first saint in America, championed the rights of the native faithful against the unjust treatment of Alexander Baranof and others. Also among the ten missionaries was St. Juvenaly who was martyred along with his native companion as they traveled into Alaska's interior to bring the Word of God to other indigenous people.

The many talents and accomplishments of St. Innocent are well documented as are his far-reaching missionary trips to remote villages in Alaska and Siberia. The young Peter and Aleut was an example of the steadfastness of the faithful as he accepted martyrdom instead of renouncing Orthodoxy. St. Yakov, the first Creole priest, endured much, including poverty and serious illness, as he faithfully served his people.

These five saints and others planted the seeds of Orthodoxy in the New World. Because of their love of God and perseverance, the Faith not only spread but also flourished in Alaska.

In 1867, Alaska was sold to the United States. In the years that followed, aggressive assimilation policies were carried out under the direction of Alaska's new commissioner of education. Children were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in boarding schools. Here they were told that they would learn to live a "new and better way." But things like speaking one's native language were not tolerated. To do so brought swift and severe punishment. Children were not only torn from their families but also their Faith. There are numerous documented incidents of Russian Orthodox priests coming to the aid of both children and adults whose rights had been violated.

Until the Russian Revolution, missionary efforts in Alaska continued to be funded and clergy sent to add to the growing number of Native priests. After 1917, everything stopped. A small number of priests were left to minister the needs of the faithful throughout Alaska. Sometimes it would take several years before a priest could visit a village. Despite this, Orthodox Christians remained faithful to the Church. For over half a century and without any outside help, the survival and growth of Orthodoxy in Alaska was due solely to the joint efforts of both Alaskan clergy and laity.

In June 1942, Alaska was bombed and invaded by Japanese troops. Residents of the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands were either relocated by American forces or sent to Japanese labor camps. Sixty percent of all who left their homes died of disease or malnutrition. For two years, American troops were stationed in the Aleutians. They looted and vandalized churches, used them for target practice, and desecrated holy objects. For those who were able to return to their homes and churches after the war, the work of reconstruction was financially and emotionally overwhelming.

Alaska became a state in 1959, but by the early 1960s it already faced serious economic difficulties. Today, despite a thriving tourist industry, problems continue, especially for Orthodox Christians. Unemployment is very high in many villages. Once people who lived off the land and sea, Alaskans now work for low wages for the Japanese who own and operate the state's fishing industry.

Alaska ranks first in the nation in alcoholism and suicide. During one month, February 2001, the Diocese of Alaska lost 46 members – nine to suicide and 37 deaths due to alcohol.

There are approximately 30 priests for 90+ churches. Other religious groups take advantage of this situation by trying to mislead the Orthodox faithful with false information. Due to harsh elements and lack of funds, many churches are in disrepair.

Despite the many problems facing our brothers and sisters in Alaska, they remain steadfast in their Faith. Next month, I will share information about organizations that are providing positive support for the Orthodox faithful in Alaska.

Margaret Pysarchyk

PRESS FUND

Thank You/Spasebo. Over the years, I have made so many friends. I have never met you but your notes and phone calls are so warm, I feel that I know you. Thank you for your letter of friendship and for your help to keep publishing The Orthodox Herald. John Holovach, Theodore F. Cramer, Apollo and Elizabeth Manchuk, Irene Allen, Ethel Watlock, Anne Dorozynski, Michael and Lori Wesdell, Anonymous (3), Walter DuBlanica, John Tkaczyk, Steve and Irene Pacak, Sophie Nahorniak, John Koff, Mr. and Mrs. John Homa, Boris Gontcharenko, Catherine Shaffchick, John Bodnar, Eleanora Latyszonek, Tom Swift, Beverly Karol, Mary Kollar, Nancy Wingert, Afton Chowansky, John Glagola.

Julia Flick and Mary Mytryshyn in memory of Mary Kinn.

Michael Bondarchuk in memory of parents V. Rev. Averky and Matushka Marie and Fr. Basil.

Dorothy Koropchak in memory of her husband John, the Koropachak and Pelak families and Fr. Basil.

(Mary Kinn died recently. Her family requested that gifts in her memory be made to The Orthodox Herald, which she loved and wanted so much to continue. We shared many phone calls about our days as Cadet Nurses and our love for our Orthodox faith. She was full of ideas and acted upon them. She sponsored the Packet Plan in her parish and about this time of year went to a garden center and purchased willow plants. She gave them out to the children with instructions on how to plant them in their yards so that in coming years they could take cuttings and bring them to church to be distributed on Palm Sunday. Memory Eternal, Mary. I miss talking to you. Matushka Nina)

LIGHTER MOMENT

A woman at the registrar's office was filling out a form for her Driver's License and hesitated when she came to the space marked "AGE."

The clerk waited politely and patiently, then leaned over and whispered: "The longer you wait, the older you get."

THE ANNUNCIATION

We read in Luke 1:26-38 about Archangel Gabriel coming to Mary while she was at prayer and after greeting her, telling her she was in her future: the conception, and birth, life and destiny of Jesus.

The Orthodox Church commemorates this event on March25/April 7. This day, which is known as Blahoveschenie in Slavonic, has been included in the listing of Major Holy Days for its significance in our spiritual life.

Many civil governments dated their legal documents from this day as it was the beginning of the New Year. One of the Tropars for this day gives a logical reason for this. It says: "Today is the beginning of our salvation, and the manifestation of the mystery from the ages; For the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin, and Gabriel proclaimeth grace."

The tropar, with which we are more familiar, states: "Today is the beginning of our Salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery! The Son of God became the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of grace. Together with him, let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice, O full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee!"

(Tropars are short hymns which give an explanation of a liturgical event or a saint.)

INCENSE IN THE CHURCH

Incense is produced by burning gums or resins on charcoal. Most often these natural substances, which are obtained by cutting the trunks of certain trees (such as pine), are mixed with perfumed oils, so that the smoke which they produce is aromatic.

In the Old Testament, we read of the preparation and use of incense (Exodus 30:34-38). In the 141st Psalm we read, "LET MY PRAYER BE COUNTED AS INCENSE BEFORE YOU, AND THE LIFTING UP OF MY HANDS AS AN EVENING SACRIFICE."

In the New Testament, the priest Zachariah saw the vision about his son John the Baptist at the moment he was offering incense in the temple (Luke 1:49).

We also note that one of the gifts given to the baby Jesus was incense (Matthew 2:11).

During the first years of Christianity, incense was not used in the worship because the pagans made widespread use of it in their worship services. The "offering of incense" to Caesar as god was, in fact, the occasion for many early Christian martyrdoms. This rejection of the use of incense in worship because of its pagan connections is found in the writings of such early Christians as Clement of Alexandria. However, it seems that it was used at that time at Christian funerals.

With the passage of the idolatrous persecutions, the biblical tradition of the use of incense returned to the life of the worship in the Church. Thus, in a very real way, the prophetic words of Malachi, in the Old Testament, and Revelation in the New Testament, were fulfilled in the Church's worship: "From the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 1:11).

And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with prayers of all saints from the hand of the angel before God" (Revelation 8:5).

Incense stands were used in the early Church. A very early one (first Christian centuries) is found in the Museum of Mannheim in West Germany. The most ancient portable censer of the type with which we are familiar in the Orthodox Church is dated to the 4th or 5th century and is located in the Trier in West Germany, a site of ancient Roman ruins.

In the pagan world, the censing of important persons such as the emperor, was a way by which honor was attributed to them. So one of the meanings of the use of incense was to indicate that the person or object censed is honored. The priest or deacon censes the Bishop (or his throne), the icons of Christ and the Saints, the altar, the people.

But the most important significance of incense use in worship is that it symbolizes our prayers rising heavenward to God, both representing and provoking them. The Bible itself gives this understanding, speaking of "golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Revelation 5:8).

FROM THE WRITINGS OF A CONVERT TO THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

My favorite prayer by far is the Jesus Prayer, the prayer of the heart, a wonderful way to pray without ceasing every minute of the day and night. One begins saying it orally, then mentally, then with the heart. The prayer is not magical. It is not enough simply to repeat the words. One must try to live his life as he is taught through prayer. The Jesus Prayer is many things. Great saints have written about it. It is well to read their works. The "Philokalia" and "The Way of the Pilgrim" teach us much about it.

One way to think of the Jesus Prayer is: we look at Him for whom the prayer is named: "LORD," master of all creation, visible and invisible. "JESUS," Messiah, the one who is coming to save the faithful people. "CHRIST," anointed one. "SON OF GOD," indeed, He is the One begotten of the Father before all ages Who became incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary, born for us, lived and suffered and died for us, and rose again that we might have life and have it in all its fullness.

"God became man that man might become God," we are told by St. Athanasios. What else can we say in the presence of the One so holy and beautiful and pure but "HAVE MERCY ON ME, A SINNER"? This prayer is a great aid to Theosis.

Theosis means "deification." As Timothy Ware states in THE ORTHODOX CHURCH: "If man is to share in God's glory, the Greek Fathers argued, if he is to be perfectly one with God, this means in effect that man must be "deified": he is called to become by grace what God is by nature. Accordingly, Saint Athanasius summed up the purpose of the Incarnation by saying: "God became man that we might be made god." The Greek word is definitive: It means "becoming god." Maria King

* * * * * *

It is not your love that sustains the marriage, but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love.

WINTER'S GRACE

What do you do on weekends? Considerable initiative is shown in the ways people are using their weekend time, but it seems that the suggestion is seldom made that people ought to go to church every weekend. Church is left out with the result that Sunday has become a national holiday instead of a holy day.

A questionnaire mailed out by a church asked: "How far do you live from the church?" and "How long does it take you to get to church?" One member answered: "I live about four blocks from the church and to get there it takes me about three months."

Church-going is not left to human whim. It is a divine must. "Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy: six days shall you labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath to the Lord your God." The Lord has promised to be where people are assembled in His Name.

A weekend spent at the ocean, museum, golf course or relaxing around the house may be somewhat therapeutic, but it cannot bring healing to a person's deepest needs. We recently read this tongue-in-cheek note:

"Do you have a Mrs. Stegura in your parish?

Mrs. Stegura, age 81, has not missed church in over 1,000 Sundays. She has a perfect record for nearly 20 years.
What's wrong with her?
Doesn't she ever have company to keep her from church?
Doesn't she ever have headaches, colds, nervous spells, tired feelings, sudden calls out of town, business trips, Sunday picnics, stress?
Doesn't she ever sleep late on Sunday mornings?
Doesn't it ever rain or snow, or get hot or cold?
Doesn't she ever have her feelings hurt by the priest or some member?
Doesn't she have a job to keep her away Sunday by Sunday, year after year?
Doesn't she have places to visit over the weekend (the only time she has)?
Doesn't she ever have a bad-hair day?
Doesn't she have laundry or grass-cutting to catch up on?
What's wrong with Mrs. Stegura anyway?

BIBLE QUIZ

Identify the Book in the Bible from which these familiar phrases originated.

1. Eat, drink, and be merry
2. Pride goeth before a fall
3. Give up the ghost!
4. Spare the rod and spoil the child
5. My brother's keeper
6. Fat of the land
7. A lamb for the slaughter
8. The blind leading the blind

ANSWERS:

1. Ecclesiastes 8:15: "A man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry."
2. Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."
3. Job 14:10: "But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"
4. Proverbs 13:24: "He that spareth the rod hateth his son."
5. Genesis 4:9: "Am I my brother's keeper?"
6. Genesis 45:18: "And ye shall eat the fat of the land."
7. Isaiah 53:7: "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter:"
8. Matthew 15:14: "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

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ALASKA: Mr. and Mrs. John Homa, Jeremy Hersey, Ethel Watlock, Stephen Bock.

ALASKA AND MISSION: Mary K. Zemanik

Traditionally, icons were not signed. If the painter chooses to sign his name, it is always done on the back, using a formula such as: Written by the hand of...". The reason for this is theological. The iconographer is merely an instrument of the Holy Spirit. There is no role in iconography for the ego of the painter. Guided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, a window to heaven, an icon is created.

Undique (from everywhere)

Pray for all as you would pray for yourself, with the same sincerity and fervor, look upon their infirmities and sicknesses as your own, their spiritual ignorance, their sins and lusts, as your own, their temptations, misfortunes and multiple afflictions as your own. Such prayer will be accepted with great favor by the Heavenly Father, the most gracious, common Father of all, whose boundless love embraces and preserves all creatures. (St. John Kronstadt)

The readings of the Gospel and Epistle are part of the Lectionary. The selections as we know them today were completed in the 9th and 10th centuries.

Praying for others is called intercessory praying. An example of this in the Scriptures is the Canaanite mother (in Matthew 15:21-28), who prayed for her daughter. The Great Litany, the first one in the Divine Liturgy, is an example of an intercessory prayer. It is full of litanies (little prayers) for everyone in the universe.

We have been given our religion as a heritage. We don't own that heritage but have received it as a gift, seeking to embrace and express it anew in our generation that others might find life in Christ - even as that tradition has brought us to share in God's own life. The tradition isn't ours to do with as we please. We stand beneath it, seeking to respond in the obedience of faith. Second century, St. Irenaeus wrote: "We guard with care the faith we have received from the Church for...under the action of God's Spirit, this deposit of great price...is constantly being renewed and causes the very vessel that contains it to be renewed."

Proverbs is read during Great Lent. In 15:1 we read: "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." We must ask ourselves: "When have I spoken or acted in anger? What are the advantages of holding my tongue, stopping my hand, or giving a 'soft answer'?"

PRAY: Father; help me to never forget the terrible destructive power of strife. When a desire to lash out at someone wells up within me, help me to stop it before I act upon it.



Editor's Notes

The Bible readings during this Great Lent are taken from Genesis. In one of the readings we learn about Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, who was being treated so badly by Sarah that she fled into the wilderness. As she stood beside a spring in this desolate and lonely place where she had fled, the Angel of the Lord visited her. He assured her that God Himself was aware of her situation. Hagar responded positively to the Angel: "You are the God Who sees." Genesis 16:13. She found great comfort in knowing that God saw her and knew about her distress.

You and I can have that same confidence in God's watchcare. We are blessed if we are sure that the Lord God is with us wherever we go, and that He knows everything that happens to us. We are never alone, never forgotten, and never beyond hope.

Whatever our troubling circumstances are, whether we are afflicted by illness or injury, brokenhearted over the loss of a loved one, or dissillusioned because a friend has betrayed or rejected us, God knows and cares. Be assured that you are under God's watchful eye even when you are deeply depressed, or plagued by loneliness and discouragement. Yes, like Hagar, we are blessed if we know and believe that God sees us. God does not shield us from life's storms; He shelters us in life's storms.

What a spiritually uplifting experience it was to participate in the consecration of Bishop Tikhon at St. Tikhon's Monastery Church on February 14. He accepted the Orthodox faith in the 80's and has spent much of his life since that time at either St. Tikhon Seminary or Monastery. We joined voices with the hundreds of others in "AXIOS." If only there was some way we could spread the uplifting spirit of the day with others!

We have had a cold winter here in Northeast Pennsylvania. As we progress through the month of March, we observe the little signs that tell us Spring is coming. The thickening of the bare branches of the trees, the popping up of the flowers, some through the inch of snow left under the evergreens, the touch of green grass in the protected areas of the yard. It seems that not only are we getting prepared for the Resurrection of Christ, but so is nature.

May God be with you and give you joy in knowing that "He is."

Matushka Nina Stroyen

IT'S CALLED

In most churches there are two icon stands on the main level of the church in front of the ikonostas. These are called analoy. On them we see ikons. On the right one we find that of Christ and on the left one that of the Mother of God.

Why are these placed here? The purpose of the analoy is to make the veneration of the icons of Christ and the Mother of God more accessible to the people. Rather than kissing and venerating the icons on the ikonostas, we honor those on the analoy.

When we enter God's house, we ought to venerate His image and that of His Holy Mother. We are in the presence of God in Church and the appropriate thing to do is to bow and worship Him.

It is traditional when entering the Church, to first kiss the ikons on the analoy and then kiss the one on the tetrapod (the table in the center of the church) on which is displayed an ikon of the Holy Day or saint of the Church.

* * * * * *

"Beam me up, Jesus!" Will God harvest faithful people before the cataclysmic end of time? We all know people who pray that they won't be left behind. Others put the rapture in the "unknowable and mysterious" category. Bible passages are vague, cryptic, and hinting. Orthodox accept the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:36: "of that hour day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."



Did you notice that our traditional recipes take a long time to prepare but it doesn't cost much to make them? Now, we want recipes that don't take long to prepare and don't mind the cost.

This month I am sharing a recipe for Lenten Mushroom Soup, which has been requested – it's both time and cost efficient. And a recipe for Father M. who loves pasta with clam sauce but became very ill when eating it out – here's a recipe. Stay well.

MUSHROOM SOUP

1 jar canned mushrooms
3 potatoes
1 small onion
3 Tbls. flour
3 Tbls. oil
4 cups water
salt and pepper to taste

Peel potatoes, cube. Boil until soft but not mushy, this takes about 10-15 minutes. Add mushrooms and salt. Put aside. Put oil in pan. Add chopped onion and brown. Take onion out. Add flour to pan, mixing quickly as you don't want it to burn. Keep stirring until medium brown. Dip some liquid from potatoes. Add gradually to flour, stirring constantly until smooth. Add to potato and mushroom mixture. Simmer 5 minutes. (May add a bit of garlic powder, if desired.)

PASTA WITH WHITE CLAM SAUCE

2 Tbls. oil or oleo
1 large clove garlic, minced
2 Tbls. flour
2 cans (6 1/2 oz. each) chopped clams
1/4 cup dry white wine or vermouth
milk (may be skim)
1/4 cup parsley, finely chopped
1/2 tsp. thyme
salt and pepper to taste
1 lb. pasta, cooked and drained

Put oil or margarine in small saucepan. Add garlic and cook 1 minute. Do not let it change color. Stir in flour and cook over low flame for two minutes. Drain clams, reserving liquid. Combine the reserved clam juice and white wine. Add enough milk to make two cups liquid. Add to flour mixture gradually and cook until sauce thickens slightly. Add parsley, thyme, salt and pepper. Simmer about 10 minutes. Add clams and heat through. Serve over hot, well-drained pasta.

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THE POWER OF THE CROSS

During our voyage through Lent, just as during our voyage through earthly life, which is often called a sea, we often find ourselves exhausted by all the trials and tribulations which we encounter.

On the third Sunday of Lent the Church offers us a tool to deal with this exhaustion. It is the Cross of our Lord. A note of warning: if we try to use it as an object of superstition, that is something which we turn to without making the effort of uniting our souls, hearts and minds in faith with the One Who offered Himself for us upon the Cross, we shall not experience the true power of this symbol of triumph.

To know the Paradise which is the Cross, we must submit ourselves to the will of God as Jesus did. He also did not see the tests ahead of Him as something pleasant and easy to bear. He cried and suffered from fear. But He surrendered Himself to the will of the father. He trusted in Him. And the Father gave Him the greatest of honour by raising Him from the dead and giving Him the highest of authority over everything that exists in all the worlds.

We also, if we consistently submit ourselves to God, shall find an incredible victory - even during this earthly life - with patience. And after this life upon this lovely earth, the heavenly life shall be a celebration of the greatest and most pleasing of joys - joys that we have merely tasted in this life. Let us accept the powerful Cross as our victory sign. Let us follow the Lord!

Ihor George Kutash, Priest

Home Bible Reading Schedule

MARCH 2004

1. Genesis 3:21-4:7	18. Genesis 10:32-11:9
2. Genesis 4:8-15	19. Genesis 12:1-7
3. Genesis 4:16-26	20. Mark 7:31-37
4. Genesis 5:1-24	**21. Mark 9:17-31**
5. Genesis 5:32-6:8	22. Genesis 13:12-18
6. Mark 1:35-44	23. Genesis 15:1-15
7. Mark 2:1-12	24. Genesis 17:1-9
8. Genesis 6:9-22	25. Genesis 18:20-33
9. Genesis 7:1-5	26. Genesis 22:1-18
10. Genesis 7:6-9	27. Mark 8:27-31
11. Genesis 7:11:-8:3	**28. Mark 10:32-45**
12. Genesis 8:4-21	29. Genesis 27:1-41
13. Mark 2:14-17	30. Genesis 31:3-16
14. Mark 8:34-9:1	31. Genesis 43:26-31; 45:1-16
15. Genesis 8:21-9:7	
16. Genesis 9:8-17	
17. Genesis 9:18-10:1	

BIBLE STUDY

We notice that Genesis is read during the week and Mark is read during the weekends. Why? There are no Divine Liturgies during the week except for the Presanctified Liturgy, which is really a Vesper Service with Holy Communion. Readings from Genesis are taken at Vespers during Great Lent.

The reading we will focus on is to be read on March 16: Genesis 9:8-17. It deals with commitment. Do we keep our commitments only as long as it's convenient to carry them out and then as soon as they become a burden do we throw them out with the trash?

The Bible gives us an entirely different view. God's promise to mankind in the story of Noah is a model of genuine commitment. It reveals the nature of commitment and assures us that commitments are essential to the human spirit. It also shows us how to keep our commitments to ourselves and to each other.

Many of us find it hard to sustain commitments. In some matters it may not mean much: like cheating on diets, forgetting New Year's resolutions by February and easing up on our Great Lent ones by now.

But to break a commitment to marriage, to friendships, to our children, or to our deepest principles, is serious business. In fact, people who cannot keep commitments at all do so at a devastating emotional cost to themselves and those around them.

In the story of Noah, God makes a commitment or "covenant" with mankind and all earthly creatures. Never again, He says, will the world be destroyed by flood. The rainbow is to serve as an eternal reminder of this commitment made to "all future generations."

This reading shows us how commitments preserve our relationships with others. It assures us that the relationship between God and man is guaranteed. The covenant shelters us against His justifiable wrath toward human wrongdoing.

This is true of relationships between people, too. If a relationship is to endure, it requires commitment. Without it the family will crumble and friendships will dissolve. Without a reliable promise to keep agreements and contracts, commerce would be impossible. Our parishes and communities would fall apart if we failed to honor the rules that guide them. The ability to make and keep commitments is essential to our spiritual, personal and social

(Continued on Page 83, Col. 2)